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Purchase of European Armor

THE Museum's collection of European armor has been greatly strengthened by a recent purchase of fourteen specimens acquired at an important sale in New York. In choosing these an effort was made to obtain for the Museum pieces which would exemplify excellence in metal work, rather than examples of historical importance in the history of arms, or of exceptional occurrence. In as much as Philadelphia is one of the chief centers of craftsmen in metal, it is of signal moment that the Museum be able to place on view objects and series of objects which shall be of present inspiration and of historical significance to students and to skilled metal workers.

With the exception of two court swords of the eighteenth century, all the examples in this new collection are authentic pieces of seventeenth century arms and armor. The rapier illustrated on the cover of this BULLETIN is the most notable piece of a series of three swept-hilted rapiers. It is probably of Neapolitan make. The splendidly forged Milanese blade has lettering in the basal groove and circular and rectangular perforations between the letters. Its cup-shaped guard is richly designed in four openwork panels with mascarons and spiral foliation in large pattern; the anneux, quillons, and branch are boldly fileworked in a twisted cord motive; and the pommel, like the guard, is worked in knots and loops. The whole rapier, though heavy, is delicately balanced, and the excellence of the workmanship and the unusual quality of the design make it of pre-eminent interest. It was made about 1620.

The second rapier is of slightly earlier make, about the beginning of the seventeenth century, and comes from North Italy. The blade is Brescian, and the guard made up of seven anneux or concentric semicircular bars all joined together on either side; at the base the first pair of anneux are filled with openwork plates, embossed and incised with delicate decoration. The pommel is large, twelve-sided, and undecorated; the swept-hilt has been reblackened and the tip of one quillon repaired, otherwise this interesting piece is in its original condition. The third rapier is of German manufacture; it has a Solingen blade, and a large cup guard decorated with numerous small punched stars and rosettes in a diaper pattern. The pommel is a truncated cone with closely ridged sides, and the blade bears cabalistic letters on either side near its base. It was made in 1620.

The most striking piece in the group is a French fencing mask of 1625. It is embossed with the verisimilitude of a face with long mustachios and a Louis Trieze pointed beard; the mouth and eye openings have upraised borders, to deflect the stroke of the opponent's blade; the eyelids, beard, and mustachios are ornamented with roping. Another interesting example of French armor is a long-cuffed gauntlet. It is rare to find gauntlets in which not only the fingers but the thumb are all present; this piece is, however, complete, and traces

of the original gilding *en plein* are evident, as well as fragments of the red velvet with which it was lined. The cuff is decorated with rivet heads arranged in rosettes.

The only piece of English armor in the collection is a pillow sword, dated 166(1?). This is a short weapon with a four-edged blade. The cross-guard and the pommel are exquisitely sculptured in basket work with ornaments of four petalled roses at the three terminals. The simplicity of the design and the fastidiousness of workmanship combine to make this a most satisfying example of metal work. A second pillow sword comes from Italy. The blade, besides being decorated with etched birds and foliation, bears the inscription "*solo deo gloria—anno 1655.*" The hilt, grip and quillons are handsomely sculptured with acanthus leaves.

A Spanish left-handed dagger should be mentioned. It is characterized by two wide basal prongs on either side of the blade, designed to catch the rapier point and by a deft twist break it. It has a wide triangular guard pierced in spiral foliations.

The two court swords are of a foppish character which contrasts with the weapons already described. Being essentially designed for dress wear they are of much more delicate workmanship and fall rather into the class of ornament than armor. The first was made in Germany about 1750, probably by Jeremias Wachsmuth, of Augsburg, who was born in 1712 and died in 1779. The blade is Solingen, with its basal half richly etched and gilded, and inscribed "*Ne me tirez Pas Sans Raison, ne me Remettez Point Sans Honneur.*" The hilt is silver gilt and decorated with rococo ornaments. The original scabbard of calfskin is present but without chapes, or metal ferules, used to strengthen the ends. The other court sword is probably of Neopolitan workmanship, but with a German blade. The hilt is beautifully chiselled with rope and foliage ornaments, and the pierced guard is particularly fine in execution. To the hilt is attached the original *fusée* or cord. The blade bears the inscription "*mit Gottes Segens und Diesem Degens will ich Dem Feind die Ohren Fegen.*"

The other pieces of metal work, of which only brief mention need be made, are a pair of Spanish brazier tongs, seventeenth century; the chape of a Landsknecht dagger, Swiss, 1660; the chape of a hunting trousse, German, 1650; and the sheath of a Landsknecht dagger, Swiss, early seventeenth century.

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